

Now what?

Congratulations! You've decided to be abstinent, you've talked to your partner, and your partner has decided to respect you for your decision. Now you have a chance to build a stronger relationship. Find things that you like to do together. Do things with friends. Find creative, non-sexual ways to show your feelings for each other.

You know the times and places where the temptation to have sex might get too strong for you. You can avoid or plan for those times. And be especially careful with alcohol and drugs — getting high or drunk can cloud your judgment and make it impossible to stick to your decision.

HIV doesn't give second chances. There's no cure for AIDS.

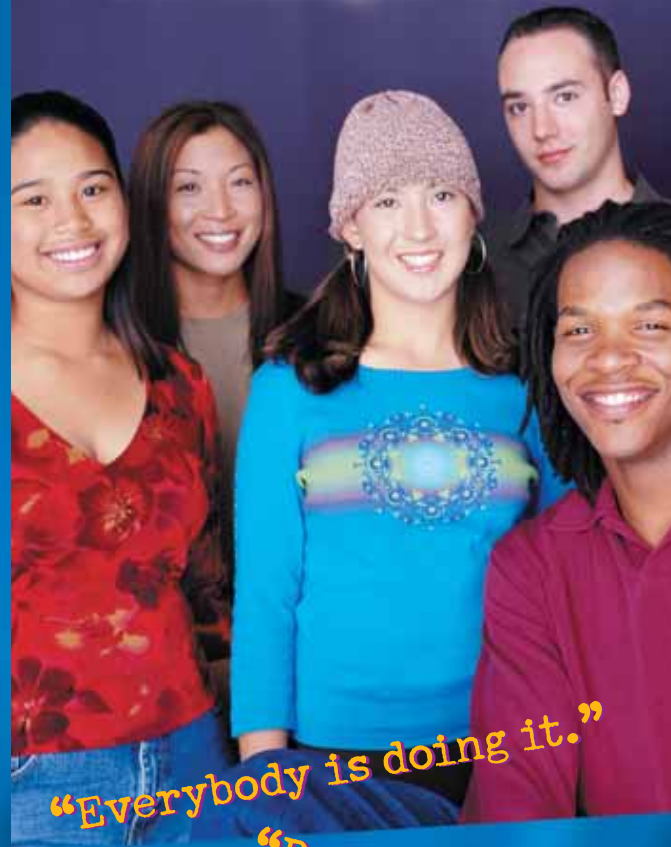
Decide it won't happen to you:
choose abstinence.



State of New York
Department of Health

Antonia C. Novello, M.D., M.P.H., Dr. P.H., Commissioner.

For the teen who's thinking about having sex...



"Everybody is doing it."

"But I love you."

"What's your problem?"

For the teen who's thinking about having sex...

AIDS is a leading killer of young adults in New York State.

And the numbers are still rising. AIDS is caused by a virus called HIV.

When you think about HIV and AIDS, you might think ,

"It can't happen to me." Or "I'm not old enough!" "But I'm straight."

"Hey, I don't shoot drugs." "I'm faithful to my partner."

But you'd be wrong — it CAN happen to you. Many of the people infected
with HIV were young and sexually active when they got infected.

But we know how HIV is spread.

And you need to know how to protect yourself.

How is HIV spread?

IF YOU ARE SEXUALLY ACTIVE
YOU ARE AT RISK FOR HIV/AIDS.

Almost half of New Yorkers with AIDS got it by having sex. HIV is spread from one person to another through body fluids – blood, semen and vaginal secretions.

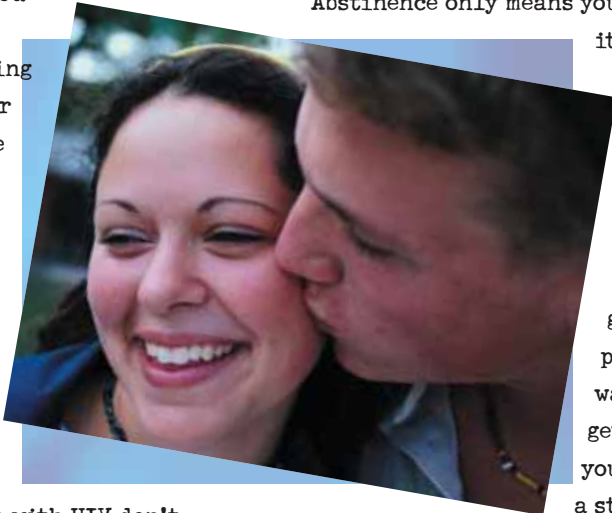
So if you have sex (any kind of sex – vaginal, oral or anal) with an infected person, you might get infected. It might only take one time. Using a condom during sex lowers the risk, but condoms don't always work.

HIV is also spread by sharing needles and other equipment to inject drugs (including steroids, vitamins or insulin) or body piercing or tattooing.

“But it’s only this once!”

It might only take once for you to become infected with HIV.

There is no easy way of knowing if someone has HIV or another sexually transmitted disease (STD). You can't tell by looking at them. And people aren't likely to tell everything about themselves right away — they might not tell you about every partner they've ever had, or if they've experimented with shooting up. And many people with HIV don't even know they have it.



Abstinence is the best protection.

The only way to be sure you don't get HIV is not to have sex (and don't shoot up!). Not having sex is called abstinence. These days, lots of teens are deciding to postpone sex.

One good reason is that abstinence is the only 100% sure way not to catch gonorrhea or syphilis or some other STD.

And abstinence guarantees that you (or your partner) won't get pregnant.

Using a condom every time you have sex can lower your chances of passing HIV or other STDs. But condoms can break. People get careless. Mistakes happen.

IF YOU DECIDE TO HAVE SEX,
YOU WILL BE AT RISK FOR HIV.

You can still be close.

Abstinence only means you don't have sex —

it doesn't mean you can't be close. It doesn't mean you can't be affectionate, or enjoy intimacy.

Sometimes having sex can get in the way of getting to know your partner. Deciding to wait can give you time to get to know each other so you have a chance to build a stronger relationship.



What to do?

Decide for yourself that you will not have sex — at least not yet. And stick to your decision. That means planning ahead. Don't put yourself in situations where you'll be tempted to have sex. Find someone you trust — a close friend, a brother or sister, maybe even your parents — and tell them your decision. That can make it easier to stick to your decision.

Talk to your partner.

This may be hard to do — but if you aren't close enough to talk about sex, maybe you aren't close enough to have sex. Choose a good time and place — be sure to talk things over before you are alone and intimate together. Don't wind up having sex with someone just because it's easier to do it than to talk about it!

Explain your decision and your feelings. Be ready for some straight talk — and you might want to think ahead of time about how you'll explain your decision. If your partner cares for you, he or she will listen to your feelings.

Be prepared.

Here are some things your partner might say — and some ways you can answer:

“If you loved me, you'd do it with me.”
“If you loved me, you'd respect my decision.”

“Everybody is doing it.”
“I'm somebody, and I'm not doing it.”

“What is your problem?”
“I think we should wait. There's nothing wrong with that.”

“But I love you!”
“If you love me, you'll help me wait.”

“If you don't want to do it, I'll find somebody who will.”
“I'm sorry I don't mean more to you than that.”

And remember: It's never too late — you can decide to be abstinent even if you've had sex before.